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Helping Clients Find New Clients

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Getting the Most from Prospect Meetings

By Caryn Kopp, Chief Door Opener®

It's not easy to get a meeting with a decision maker. So when you have one, it had better go well! Have you ever walked out of a meeting and wished you had achieved a better outcome, gotten further into the discussion or secured better next steps? There are specific preparation and meeting strategies that will help you achieve the best possible outcome with what we call "the valuable real estate" of prospect meetings.

1. **Identify your objective as well as your prospect's objective for the meeting.** Most sellers think about their objective and what they want to get out of prospect meetings. They rarely think about their prospects' objective. For example, you may want to walk out with a proposal request or close a sale whereas your prospect may want to learn more about how your solution may be a better fit than the one he/she currently has in place. Very different goals. Your role is to strategically direct the meeting so you accomplish your objective while also fulfilling that of your prospect.

2. **Research the decision maker, his/her boss, the company and the industry.** A good understanding of the issues they are facing and the challenges they must overcome will help you articulate how your product or service can be the answer to their prayers. How can you make the decision maker's life better? How can you help the prospect and his/her boss achieve goals? Then, prepare how you will articulate that during the meeting (visual/vocal).

3. **Develop "high gain" questions that will elicit valuable information** that will move you closer to the close. Prepare 3-4 questions which will help you learn key information that you can leverage to position yourself as the exact right fit. One time a seller failed to ask what the prospect's role was in the organization. Had he asked he would have learned that the decision maker had responsibility over 3 areas. The seller assumed (bad idea to assume) that the decision maker was responsible for 1 area. Missed opportunity.

4. **Anticipate prospect objections and prepare responses in advance.** Pre-think, prepare and practice...the 3 P's of being ready for even the most difficult objections. If you can pre-think the objections you will face, you can also prepare the answers. The answer can be a visual, a question, a statement or a success story. Chose the format that best helps your prospect move beyond the objection. Practice the response to be sure your delivery is spot on.

5. **Determine what to present, what to leave behind and what to keep in your "toolbox" just in case.** Use your visual aids to aid you visually. The talk track you use with the visuals is significantly more important than the visuals themselves.

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6. **Plan the flow of the meeting, leaving enough time for the "next steps" discussion**…the reason you're there. When you arrive, check how much time your prospect has for your meeting. Make sure to manage your time well. If you have an hour long meeting, you will want to close for next steps and set date & time approx. 40 minutes into the meeting. Most are good at identifying next steps but few take out their calendars and book the date and time while they're in the meeting. This step will save you time and shorten your sales cycle.Try it.

Following these key steps will help ensure you are prepared for important meetings, stay in control of conversations and obtain the best possible outcomes.

Caryn Kopp is the Chief Door Opener® at Kopp Consulting, LLC, whose ***Door Opener Service*** *helps clients secure initial meetings with high-level, hard-to-reach prospect decision makers. Reach her at* ***www.koppconsultingusa.com***